

Neighbors

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MAY 2022

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A regional newspaper serving Cass County, Michigan and the surrounding area, and distributed at homes and businesses in Dowagiac, Cassopolis, Edwardsburg, Vandalia, Jones, Marcellus, Decatur, Union, Sister Lakes, and Three Rivers, with mail delivery at homes on Diamond, Eagle, Birch, Corey, Donnell, Indian, Magician, Shavehead, Baldwin, Long, Dewey, Cable, Juno, Christiana, Painter, Paradise, Stone, Buck, Lewis, Big & Little Twin and Bair lakes

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FIELD TRIP: The great Cassopolis Renaissance Pages 9-11



REGIONAL NEWS

Historical Society meetings

Wakelee - A railroad boom town will be the topic to be presented at the Wakelee Methodist Church on Tuesday, May 17. The speaker, Allen F. Butchbaker, spent his youth in the Wakelee area. Also, many of his relatives spent their lives in the area. Stories about all of these will be presented over the time of the boom years in Wakelee.

The meeting will be at 7 pm at the Wakelee Methodist Church (3 miles west of M40 on Dutch Settlement St. or 5 miles east of Decatur Rd.)

The June meeting will be held at the Bonine House on M60, Vandalia, on June 14. Daren Bettinger will speak on, "Cass County's Black Civil War Soldiers."

Meetings are free and open to the public.

Cassopolis Community Forum

The Village of Cassopolis and Michigan State University Extension will host a community forum called "Imagine Cass, Embracing the Vision," on Wednesday, May 11 from 6-8 pm at Marion Magnolia Farms, 57367 Twin Lakes Road, Cassopolis.

Light dinner and refreshments will be provided at this free event, which is open to anyone interested in the future of Cassopolis and the surrounding area.

During the summer of 2021, the community received five first-time visitors who have shared what they see as strengths and weaknesses in a program called First Impressions in Tourism (FIT). Their impressions will be shared at this forum, where community leaders will discuss their visit and begin the next steps guiding Cassopolis' future.

Farm History Day resumes in May

Farm History Day Resumes

SOUTH HAVEN - After a two year pandemic hiatus, Farm History Day at the Michigan Flywheelers Museum is back on the calendar.

Scheduled for Friday, May 6, the event, which is held from 9 am to 2 pm, rain or shine, offers students a chance to experience early rural farm life by participating in hands-on activities such as making rope, grinding corn and dipping candles as well as learning to play with some old fashion wooden toys.

This marks the 21st year for Farm History Day.

"We began holding Farm History Day as part of our educational goal for the museum," explains museum president Patrick Ingalls. "That first year, we had about 300 attend. Close to 1,500 attended in 2019."

"We've also seen a growing trend of parents and especially grandparents bring the kids to this," he said. "Grandparents seem to like it because it brings back a lot of memories."

There will about 35 activities with many of them being hands-on learning experiences. Every year, Ingalls says, the museum tries to add on new things to do to help keep the wait times as short as possible but it all depends on the number of volunteers.

"We're not sure what to expect this year as it's been two years since we've held the event," he said. "A lot has changed



since then."

Museum officials ask that any schools and homeschoolers planning on attending this year let them know how many students and chaperons they will be bringing. To contact call 639-2010 or email michiganflywheelers@yahoo.com.

The museum is located at 06285 68th Street, South Haven.

For more information visit <http://www.michiganflywheelers.org>.

To RSVP visit <https://events.anr.msu.edu/FITCassopolis/>. For more information call 269-445-8648 or email aoflynn@cassopolis-mi.us.

Beckwith to present "Five Women Wearing the Same Dress" in May

The Beckwith Theatre will present the play "Five Women Wearing the Same Dress on Friday and Saturday, May 6, 7, 13, & 14 at 7:30pm, and Sunday, May 8

& 15 at 2 pm at the theatre, 100 New York Ave in Dowagiac,. Tickets are \$15 (call 269-782-7653 for reservations)

During an ostentatious wedding reception at a Knoxville, Tennessee, estate, five reluctant, identically clad bridesmaids hide out in an upstairs bedroom, each with her own reason to avoid the proceedings below. As the afternoon wears on, these five very different women joyously discover a common bond in this

wickedly funny, irreverent, and touching celebration of the women's spirit.

For more information call 782.7653, email BeckwithTheatreMI@gmail.com or visit www.BeckwithTheatre.com.

MDHHS expands partnership

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has expanded its efforts to provide free, at-home testing kits by kits to Michigan





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REGIONAL NEWS

libraries. For Michigan families spending time in group settings or returning from spring break trips, these test kits are a valuable tool in preventing the spread of COVID-19 when returning to work and school. More than 24,000 kits have been shipped to 70 libraries. Kits are limited at each location, and are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Michiganders are asked to take one kit per person, up to five per household. To obtain a kit, visit the Cass District Library at 319 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031.

If you are unable to obtain test kits or require additional testing. In that case, Van Buren Cass District Health Department continues to offer Community Test Clinics at Ascension Borgess-Lee Hospital: 420 High Street, Dowagiac on Mondays and Wednesdays from noon - 6 pm.

Outdoor Adventures nature camps

St. Joseph County (IN) Parks is now taking registrations for "Outdoor Adventures" summer nature camps at St. Patrick's County Park.

Six camps are offered for children

entering kindergarten through 8th grade.

The programs will include:

- June 7 Disc and Kayaks (ages 11-14)
- June 27- July 1: Nature's Super Detectives (ages 5 -6)
- July 6: Dune Day (ages 11-14)
- July 11-15: Wonders of Water (ages 10-11)
- July 18-July 22: What's Happening? Habitats! (ages 8-9)
- July 25-July 29: Treasure Hunters (ages 6-7)

For more information, or to request registration materials, call 574/654-3155, or visit www.sjcparks.org.

Protect against ticks, mosquitoes

Van Buren/Cass District Health Department (VBCDHD) will continue participating in a Vector-Borne Disease Surveillance and Prevention Program in partnership with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

Mosquito-borne diseases are present in Michigan every year and present a severe risk to human and animal health. Mosquito and tick control will be done by

placing mosquito traps and conducting tick drags throughout Van Buren and Cass county. The program will also support public education on mosquito-borne disease prevention, mosquito control, and tick-borne disease prevention.

Residents can stay healthy by using simple, effective strategies to protect themselves and their families. The following steps are recommended to avoid the transmission and spread of mosquito and tick-borne illnesses:

- Apply insect repellents that contain the active ingredient DEET, or other EPA-approved products to exposed skin or clothing. Always follow the manufacturer's directions for use.
- Wear light-colored, long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors. Apply insect repellent to clothing to help prevent bites.
- Maintain window and door screening to help keep mosquitoes and other bugs outside.
- Empty water from mosquito breeding sites around the home, such as buckets, unused kiddie pools, old tires, or similar sites where mosquitoes lay eggs.

■ Performing daily tick checks. This includes animals and equipment that were outside.

VBCDHD will be offering tick identification services on Mondays and Thursdays from 9 am - 2 pm. The service is offered to help identify the breed of a tick, to help establish if it is capable of carrying a vector-borne disease. This service CANNOT decipher if the tick is actually infected with Lyme disease. Please transport all ticks in a sealed bag.

For more information, visit <https://vbcassdhd.org/environmental-health/mosquitoes-what-you-need-to-know/> or contact Environmental Sanitarian, Cody Davis at (269)621-3143 ext. 1317.

Elkhart Jazz Fest

Downtown Elkhart will be alive once again... with the sound of music when the Elkhart Jazz Fest takes place on June 16 - 19. The event will kick off with a free concert at the Lerner Theatre.

You can get tickets now at the Box Office or by going to the Elkhart Jazz Festival's website.

The cost varies from \$15 to \$35.



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REGIONAL EVENTS CALENDAR

May 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15 - **Beckwith Theatre presents Five Women Wearing the Same Dress**, 7:30 pm on Fridays and Saturdays, 2 pm on Sundays, Dowagiac, \$15, 7825-7653 for reservations or email beckwiththeatre@gmail.com or visit www.beckwiththeatre.com

May 11 - **Cassopolis Community Forum "Imagine Cass, Embracing the Vision,"** 6-8 pm, Marion Magnolia Farms, 57376 Twin Lakes Rd., Cassopolis, free, dinner and refreshments provided.

May 17 - **Cass County Historical Society meeting** on Wakelee - a railroad boom town, 7 pm, Wakelee Methodist Church

June 14 - **Cass County Historical Society meeting** on Cass County's Black Civil War Soldiers, Bonine House on M 60

June 16 - 19 - **Elkhart Jazz Fest**, \$15-35, <https://elkhartjazzfestival.com/>

This month's programs at Cass District Library

Tuesdays, 1- 3 pm - **Let's Play Mahjong**, Edwardsburg Branch. Learn this ancient Chinese tile-based game. All skill levels are welcome.

Tuesdays, 2:30 pm - **Teen Tuesdays**, Edwardsburg Branch. Spend an hour with other teens and tweens expressing yourself with games and art at the Edwardsburg Branch every Tuesday afternoon. Intended for ages 12-17.

May 4, 4 -5:30 pm - **Star Wars STEAM Camp**,* Edwardsburg Branch, Join forces with the Jedi at this Star Wars inspired STEAM Camp. Create, learn and have fun! Star Wars attire is encouraged. Intended for grades 2-6. *Registration is required. Call (574) 314-6454 or visit any branch to register.

Fridays, 10 am, **Play, Learn, Grow**, Edwardsburg Branch. Join other 3-6 year olds every Friday morning for free play time to inspire growth and learning while increasing social skills, fine motor skills and early STEM skills.

May 9, All Day - **Spring Felt Animal Magnets**, Howard Branch. Pick up this fun take and make kit to create a cute felt animal magnet! Take home kits will be available while supplies last.

May 10, 4 pm - **Creative Kids - Foster Care Month**, Edwardsburg Branch. Join us at the Edwardsburg Branch for crafts, games and fun to observe National Foster Care Month. Come create a unique painting for a child in foster care. Recommended for ages 6-11.

May 11, 1 pm - **Adult Craft Club**, Main Branch. Join us at the Main Branch for a monthly craft club! Space is limited and registration is required. Supplies will be provided. Contact Stephanie at (269) 749-1384 for more information and to register.

May 11. 6 pm - **Outdoor Family Game Night**, Main Branch. Large outdoor yard games

May 13, All Day - **Share One Puzzle Exchange**, Edwardsburg Branch. Are those winter puzzles collecting dust? Bring them by the Edwardsburg Branch on Friday, May 13 to share a puzzle and take a puzzle. Please check that all pieces are included. All ages are welcome.

May 19, 10 am - **More Than a Book Club**, Maple Cafe. Faye, Faraway by Helen Fisher is a heartfelt debut novel that examines loss, faith and love as it follows a woman who travels back in time to be reunited with the mother she lost as a child. Join us at Maple Cafe in Edwardsburg for a discussion over coffee and dessert. Stop by any branch to request the book.

May 24, 6 pm - **DIY T-Shirt Tote Bag**, Mason/ Union Branch: May 23 - 6 pm, Howard Branch: May 24 - 6 pm. Do you have an older t-shirt that you want to turn into something new? Maybe you have a special shirt that has cool art, a special saying, or a favorite band that you outgrew but don't want to get rid of it yet? Up-cycle it into a no-sew tote bag! Attendees are encouraged to bring their own t-shirt to create this project, however, t-shirts will be provided.

May 25 - 6 pm - **Evening Beach Story Time**, Stone Lake Beach. Bring a blanket and join us at Stone Lake Beach for a special evening story time! This program is weather permitting.

Message in a Bottle Pen Pals (June & July), Edwardsburg Branch, Register May 9-21. Sign up to participate in a fun "Message in a Bottle" Pen Pal program this summer with residents of the Cass County Medical Care Facility. The program will run June 1 - July 30. Participants will send a weekly message back and forth with a resident from the facility each Friday in the form of a "message in a bottle". Registration is required. Call (574) 314-6454 or visit any branch to register.

Dowagiac District Library

Wednesday, May 4, - **Make & Share Cookbook Club**. The Make & Share Cookbook Club first Wednesday of the month from 5 - 5:45 pm at the Dowagiac District Library. Make a recipe from the monthly cookbook selection, then join the library for a recipe share & book discussion. To reserve your spot, call the library or email (Attn: Erin) at dowagiadistrictlibrarystaff@gmail.com

Saturday, May 7 - **Sensory Story Time** with Miss

Susanne, 11 am - noon. The Dowagiac District Library is offering Sensory Story Time on the first Saturday of each month for families with children ages 2-5 who are on the autism spectrum or who have multi-sensory needs. Through books, music and hands-on play, concepts such as colors, shapes, numbers, ABCs and feelings will be explored in a welcoming environment. If your child has difficulty sitting through a "traditional" story time, this program might be what you're looking for.

Tuesdays - **Preschool Story Time**, 10:30 - 11:30 am. The Dowagiac District Library offers this weekly story time each Tuesday. Preschool Story Time is geared toward children 3-5 years old, and will focus on developing early literacy skills and fine motor skills through listening to stories and participating in fun-filled age appropriate crafts and/or learning activities.

Tuesday, May 10 - **Read & Share Book Group** - Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier, 1 - 2 pm. The Read & Share Book Club reads a variety of titles, and meets every second Tuesday in the library Community Room. To sign up email us at dowagiadistrictlibrarystaff@gmail.com

Tuesday, May 10 - **Teen Tuesday**: Teen Cooking 101*, 3 - 4 pm. Learn to make a quick and easy snack! If you like pizza, you'll LOVE Cheesy Pepperoni Sticks! Participants will learn how to assemble and bake these scrumptious snacks and will be able to taste test them as well. *Registration is required for this event. Sign up in the youth department by 5/6/22.

Teen Tuesdays are for teens 6th through 12th grade, and meet each Tuesday in the Pokagon Room on the second level of the library.

Tuesday, May 17 - **Teen Tuesday**: Arts & Crafts, 3 - 4 pm. Want to create an original masterpiece? Join us for Pulled String Art. It involves paint, string and pressure. It may get a bit messy, so you may want to wear an old shirt.

Monday, May 23 - **OMG Book Club** for Tweens, 4 - 5 pm. May's Book: Pulitzer Prize Winner When Zachary Beaver Came to Town by Kimberly Willis Holt. "An honest coming-of-age story about a thirteen-year-old boy struggling to find himself in an imperfect world."

Tuesday, May 24 - **Teen Tuesday**: You Never Know Tuesday! 3 - 4 pm. There's no theme to the fourth Tuesday of the month — just fun and maybe learning something new! This month: Soda Science. Participants will be given an assortment of sodas to make an educated guess on what each soda is, then taste the soda to see if they were right. Warning: some flavors may be gross!

Tuesday, May 24 - **The Red Badge of Courage**, by Stephen Crane, 5 - 6 pm. Revisit those classics from school or discover something new to expand your horizons! We meet every 4th Tuesday and bring our life experiences to the discussion. None of us are experts or critics and we all have something to contribute.

To sign up, email Matt Weston at mweston@dowagiadl.org

Monday, May 30 - **Closed for Memorial Day**

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LAKE LIFE WITH JANE

Ready for a spring renewal!

by **Jane Boudreau**

Hello Neighbors! And here we have it ... May! There's no denying that we are this close to warm sunny weather and that makes for a happy Jane. Spring is a sign of renewal and I think we are all ready for it. Lighter days, brighter days, days that stretch into warm nights with stars above. I'm looking out my window right now at the lush beds of daffodils (and soon, more tulips), I think how they come back every spring like clockwork, how they have for over 35 years when I first planted them.

Lately continuity means so much more to me than before. When life seems to be spinning out of our control, sometimes all we have to do is look around at the constants in our lives, the things that ground us and make us feel secure. The bits and pieces of life that we don't always see in the big picture, they're there if we stop to look and listen. This is not to say we shouldn't chase our dreams and passions, I still have that determination to one day take off and spend a month in Spain just wandering around, or signing up for a week long writing workshop somewhere in a woodsy part of Maine. But for now, I'm just waving out my window to my daffs bobbing back and forth in the breeze.



Spring can be a challenge for decorating. If you like to change things up for the seasons, I'd focus now on lightening things up gradually. I want to pull out some of my lighter throws and floral pillows but we still might need the warm and woolly. But you can take baby steps by choosing areas in (and outside) your home to add touches of spring. For me, the first thing I do is add a floral wreath to my front door. I go for a natural look with dried flowers and buds. I also add pansies to a small urn on my porch that gets switched out to a large fern in the summer. Just these little spots of color make for a welcoming entry.



(Photo Credit: The Design Twins)

One of the simplest tricks up my sleeve is to bring the outdoors in. If you don't grow spring bulbs, fear not. Your local grocery store or nursery is flooded with them and after Easter they are marked down to make room for their summer plants and flowers. Have some fun and get creative with a variety of vases and containers. And don't overlook the potted flowers in the stores as you can plant the bulbs once they die off.



My indoor potted plants keep me sane in the cold winter months, anything green and alive lifts my spirits. I don't have a lot of space for large plants but I've learned that I can tuck them into spaces as a backdrop as you see here in our family room. Once the weather gets warmer and you open your windows, just watching your guy moving with the breeze will make your heart happy!

In addition to these little tips, keep in mind switching out napkins and placemats with pastel colors and linen like textures. Pick up a few new dishtowels with a spring-like pattern (and we can always use a few new dishtowels to replace the worn and torn). Last but not least, open those windows for goodness sake! Let that fresh air in to feel renewed and energized. Hibernation is officially over.

Living on a bay gives me the gift of seeing some beautiful creatures in their natural habitat. Here I was able to get a snap from my patio of not only a blue heron, but also a menagerie of turtles



sunning themselves on a neighbor's dock. A few weeks ago I was sitting in front of a warm fire as the light waned with the setting sun. I keep the blinds open in hopes I'll see something nocturnal (I know, I'm weird). As luck would have it, Crazy Dog Poppy started to bark relentlessly by the floor to ceiling windows. Sure enough, a baby opossum. It just sat there blinking at us for about ten minutes and then crept away to wherever it lives ... hopefully not under my shed. And



just the other night I stood in front of my kitchen sink having a glass of water when I saw the large-ish shape of some sort of animal, and then another behind it. Raccoons! Just strolling by like nobody's business. Funny thing though, I was at my home in Chicago and they were passing by right on the sidewalk. The sidewalk!! If there had been a red light they probably would have stopped. And again, I hope they don't live under my shed.

So moving on to recipes for this month.

Marinara Topped Polenta over Mixed Greens

If you haven't noticed, I try to share recipes that coincide with the seasons. Why give you a recipe for Beef Stew in mid summer? Or a cold pasta salad in the dead of winter? Anyway, May is not an easy one. Not yet warm and summery, nor the type of weather for comfort food. I looked through my imaginary recipe box and decided I'd like to share some easy but delicious salads that aren't your

average Go-To. Of course you can incorporate them into your summer menu, enjoy them al fresco, but I think they are very interesting and I feel good about cre-



ating my own take on new and old recipes. Most of all, they are simple to make and don't require a lot of ingredients.

Marinara topped Polenta over Mixed Greens
Ingredients:
1 roll of prepared polenta (find this in the Italian section of your store)
1 T olive oil
1 15 oz jar of marinara sauce
4 c mixed greens (spinach, arugula, butter lettuce for me)
1 T olive oil + 1 t (divided)
1 T of Italian seasoning (I prefer my own blend of oregano, rosemary, and thyme)
1/4 c grated Parmesan cheese
Salt & Pepper to taste

Directions:
Slice the log of polenta into 1/4 inch pieces. Saute in a pan with 1 T of olive oil until lightly browned and crispy on both sides. Remove to a plate and cover with foil to retain heat. Meanwhile, heat the marinara sauce. While doing this, add a splash of olive oil to the greens in a large bowl along with the seasonings, toss, and then divide amongst 4 plates. Place a few slices of the warm polenta on each plate and top with a large dollop of marinara. Add S&P to taste and add a good amount of Parmesan over the dish. Enjoy! Serves 4

Simple & Classic Wedge Salad
A wedge salad is just what it implies; a wedge of iceberg lettuce usually topped with a bleu cheese dressing. Bacon is often included in the mix, but over time all sorts of varieties of this classic have been served. So here is mine. It's so simple to make it's almost horrifying.

Ingredients:
1 head of iceberg lettuce, loose thin leaves removed
2 celery stalks, cleaned and finely chopped
4 thinly sliced radishes
4 oz pancetta, diced fine*
4 oz goat or feta cheese crumbles
Ranch dressing, homemade or store bought
S&P to taste

Directions:
With a sharp chef's knife, quarter the head of lettuce keeping all the leaves intact. If the center leaves appear too yellow or unappetizing, cut them out carefully. Divide the quarters amongst four plates keeping the wedge shape intact, and scatter the celery and radishes over each one.

In a small skillet over low heat, saute the pancetta until its warmed through.

Continued on next page. See:
JANE

LAKE LIFE WITH JANE

Scatter this as well as the cheese crumbles over the lettuce, drizzle with the ranch dressing, and add a bit of salt and pepper. Serves 4

*Pancetta is similar to bacon but is cured and unsmoked as opposed to bacon that is cured and smoked. And of course, both need to be cooked before eaten. You can find pancetta usually near the cheese section of your grocery store.

Lemon Raspberry Prosecco Floats

This is an adult version of the classic root beer float we loved as kids. But it's prettier, more fancy, and has alcohol. Prosecco is actually a sparkling Italian wine which should not be confused with Champagne, which comes from the region of Champagne, France. I recommend LaMarca for its crisp, sparkling taste.

Ingredients:

- 1 container of lemon sorbet
- 1 container of raspberry sorbet
- 1 750mL Prosecco
- 1 lemon cut into round slices

Directions:

Place a lemon slice in each of four glasses. Add a scoop each of the lemon and raspberry sorbet and top with the Prosecco. Then listen to everyone ooh and ah over your gorgeous little cocktail!

Until next month, I wish you warmer and sunnier days. In the meantime I'll be mulling over ideas, recipes, and useless information to pass on to you in the June Neighbors. ☺

Jane Boudreau is a writer, columnist, and lifestyle blogger who spends her time on Diamond Lake, in Chicago, and a little mountain place in North Carolina. You can contact her at blndy9@yahoo.com



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The Farm, Part II - Insuring your farm

By **Charlie Retherford**
Kemner, Iott, Benz Agency

There are many coverages needed for farm insurance. The dwelling, other non-farm structures and household personal property just like a homeowners policy is where we will begin. The farm owner will need to buy the same coverage for each location requiring personal insurance. Additionally, he will need to insure farm buildings and structures, machine shops and sheds and grain bins, parts of irrigation systems like pivots and towers, barns, stables and income producing livestock.

Farm personal property can be insured in a lump sum (or blanket). The blanket lists tools, etc.... valued under \$1000. If a storm comes along and destroys it, there would be a payment for the full amount of insurance stated in the policy. If only some of the items were damaged or ruined, only those items would be paid for.

If farm personal property is listed or scheduled on the policy, each item will have specific coverage(s). Some coverages are Actual cash value and some are replacement cost and that depends on a few things like age of equipment or machinery. Your agent will have you specifically describe each scheduled item and it's value.

Personal liability Protection for personal or farming activities including libel, slander, malicious prosecution or false arrest. Farm premises recreational liability and golf cart liability, watercraft liability for a limited amount of outboard



horsepower have a limited amount of coverage depending on the chosen policy.

Like a homeowner, the insured can schedule personal property for specific amounts of coverage based on the real value of each piece of property. That

could include jewelry, guns, and silverware, for instance.

FARM umbrellas are also available and recommended. Just like Homeowners policies, the Farm umbrella will provide additional amounts of liability

coverage to add to the base liability of the farm policy.

The farmer may also need to have commercial auto coverage for the cars and trucks used for farm work on a large farm operation. There is coverage for industry and farm use along with occasional business use.

Covering fencing will need to be scheduled on the policy along with electric gates, etc.... Income earning livestock can be insured and some trees can be insured as well. Depending on how many employees there are, there may need to be work comp coverage available.

To add to the list of items you may not have thought of (but no where near everything available), I will list some of the more unusual coverages: Farm machinery, field equipment, portable structures, etc....

Livestock: several different levels depending on the risks you choose, the value of the animal, etc....

Fences depending on what they are made of, how long the fence is, how much coverage is needed and whether there are electric gates, for instance. Recreational vehicles, tractors, combines, etc.

Be sure to check with your agent on insuring other items at the farm. You may rent out homes located on different properties that are located on the farm as well.

Once again, for the best advice on farm coverages, please feel free to come in or call one of our agents to get a quote on coverage for your farm. We would love to help you out!

AREA REAL ESTATE

The housing market in southwest Michigan

In Cass County, the housing market sales continued to plunged for the second month while selling prices soared 29% for all housing types.

When we refer to all or overall housing types, we combine results for waterfront and non-waterfront houses. So in total, 38 houses were sold in March 2022 compared to 53 in March 2021, for a 28% drop. Separately, waterfront houses sales fell 40% (6 vs. 10) houses sold, and non-waterfront houses decreased 26% (32 vs. 43).

Year-to-date, overall housing types were down 36% (97 vs. 151). Waterfront house sales were down 52% (15 vs. 31), and non-waterfront houses dropped 64% (43 vs. 120).

In March, the overall average selling price rose 29% based on the selling prices of non-waterfront houses compared to March 2021 (\$283,532 vs. \$220,633). The overall median selling price in March at \$212,500 increased 34% from \$159,900 in March 2021.

The average selling price for waterfront homes climbed 18% to \$607,812 from \$513,140 in March 2021. The median selling price for waterfront homes grew 26% (\$420,000 vs. \$332,500).

In March, the average selling price for non-waterfront soared 46% to \$222,730 from \$156,920 in March 2021. The median selling price increased 33% to \$197,450 from \$147,900 in March 2021.

The median price is the price at which 50% of the homes sold were above that price, and 50% were below.

In Cass County, there was one bank-owned or foreclosed home as a part of all closed transactions in March, for a 3% increase. In 2021, there were two houses.

The highest%age in March previously was 26% in 2015.

In comparison, the number of bank-owned or foreclosed homes as a percentage of all transactions in Cass, and the westernly 2/3 of Van Buren Counties was 3% (3 houses). The previous low percentage was 6% in February 2019. The highest%age in February was 75% in 2009.

The housing market across SWMI is adjusting to an extremely low inventory of houses for sale. The number of houses sold in February dropped 16% from February 2021 (168 vs. 200) and 20% from January 2022 sales of 210. The level of sales in February was the lowest since February 2014.

So, for the first two months of this year, the market was down 20%, with sales at 378 compared to 471 in February 2021 which was the highest year-to-date sales in our year-over-year comparison.

The inventory of houses for sale fell 24% to a record low 2.0-month supply at the end of February (480 vs. 629). This level set an unwelcome record for buyers searching listings for sale across the area. For comparison, in February 2009, there were 3099 houses for sale.

The average and median selling price in February 2022 and year-to-date selling prices soared double digits to set new record prices in the year-over-year comparison that dates back to 2006.

In February, the average selling price was \$324,027 compared to \$265,892 in February 2021, up 22%. Year-to-date, the average selling price jumped 10% (\$311,243 vs. \$284,092).

The median selling price in February

2022 increased 18% to \$224,450 from \$191,000 in February 2021. Year-to-date, the median selling price also climbed 10% (\$215,000 vs. \$195,750).

The total dollar volume increased 2% in February 2022 (\$54,436,579 vs. \$53,178,553). The year-to-date total dollar volume fell 12% (\$117,650,192 vs. \$133,807,728).

The Freddie Mac mortgage rate in February was 3.89, up from 3.55 in January for a 30-year conventional mortgage. A year ago, the rate was 2.97

When Selling a Home...

With the extremely low inventory of houses for sale, you might be wondering if this is a good time to put your house on the market. But you have a lot of questions. What if my house sells before I find a house to buy? How much is my house worth? What happens when someone makes a lousy offer? When considering making this important financial change in your life, you need to seek advice from someone you can trust to look at the whole picture with you. REALTORS® are professionally trained, have the marketing information to guide decision making, and have the pulse of what buyers' and sellers' actions or reactions are in the local market. With the many steps in the selling and buying stages, not to mention the emotions involved, working with a REALTOR® gives you peace of mind that all your questions will be answered and that the advice you receive will protect your financial investment.

When Buying a Home...

If you're considering ditching the landlord for a mortgage, there are things you need to know that'll help you figure out if

you're ready.

Your down payment may not be the biggest hurdle. A healthy credit history is important. Most borrowers will start to qualify for a mortgage with a minimum score of 620. The most competitive interest rates will be offered to those with a score of 700 or above.

You probably will have to compromise. You may start with your dream home in mind, but find that what you can afford may not be in the greatest neighborhood or have that big yard for the kids.

Be emotionally ready for financial surprises. Homeownership is more hands-on. If the bathroom breaks, you pay to have it fixed or invest in tools to do it yourself.

A mortgage can be cheaper than rent. An added incentive is that your payment will stay the same while a landlord can raise your rent. The real financial advantage is that you are building equity in your home instead of lining your landlord's pockets.

Meeting with a REALTOR® can help you gain an unbiased perspective both financially and emotionally before taking this life-changing step.

To view properties that are for sale in your local area, go to www.swmar.com and click on "Search". The Southwestern Michigan Association of REALTORS®, Inc. is a professional trade association for real estate professionals who are members of the National Association of REALTORS®, and ancillary service providers for the real estate industry in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. The Association can be contacted at 269-983-6375 or through their website at www.swmar.com.

OUR CHILDREN

The case for summer reading programs

by **SANDY FLEMING**

In a few short weeks, school will be dismissing for the summer and the kiddoes will be lounging around the house or day care with little on their minds but rest and relaxation. That's all well and good for the first week or two, but after that, everyone gets just a little bit stir crazy. Kids start complaining that there's nothing to do, then they start getting into trouble. Or, they increase their diet of screen time with video games, social media, or television. This summer, how about a different track? Get them involved in summer reading.

On Your Own

One way to keep kids' minds engaged is with reading. You've heard over and over that you should be reading out loud to your little ones, so I won't preach on that subject. But I did want to give you some statistics:

- The average child from a professional family hears 215,000 words per week; a child from a working-class family hears 125,000 words per week; and a child from a family receiving welfare benefits hears 62,000 words per week. Hart, B. & Risley, T.R. (1995). *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.
- Creating a steady stream of new, age-appropriate books has been shown to nearly triple interest in reading within months. Harris, Louis. *An Assessment of the Impact of First Book's Northeast Program*. January 2003.
- Children who are read to at least three times a week by a family member are almost twice as likely to score in the top 25% in reading compared to children who are read to less than 3 times a week. Denton, Kristen and Gerry West, *Children's Reading and Mathematics Achievement in Kindergarten and First Grade* (PDF file), U.S. Department of Education, NCES, Washington, DC, 2002.



■ When adults read to children, discussing story content, asking open-ended questions about story events, explaining the meaning of words, and pointing out features of print, they promote increased language development, comprehension of story content, knowledge of story structure, and a better understanding of language—all of which lead to literacy success. Berk, L. E. (2009). *Child Development* (8th ed.). Pearson Education, Inc.

The statistics speak for themselves. Read to the kids. Read to them as long as you possibly can. Don't stop just because they've started school. Don't even stop if they start to gripe and complain. It's that important.

If you have an older student who feels he or she is beyond the age of being read to by a parent, try reading "teasers"—the first chapter or two that will intrigue your listeners, then simply leave the book laying somewhere out in sight. If someone gets interested, great! If not, try reading another one in a few days. You can also try reading the books that are related to favorite movies or video games. Have the kids look for similarities and differences. For example, the original *Mary Poppins* movie incorporates events from several different *Mary Poppins* books.

There's a lot of value in requiring kids to read over summer. Ask your local librarian or do a quick search online or even ask at your child's school to get a list of popular and age-appropriate literature titles, and make sure there are at least a few in the house at all times. Have the kids read before they start the screen time each day.

And don't forget to take some

Once you've got them cracking books every day, don't forget that the process doesn't end there. Reading is meaningless if you don't interact with the book in some fashion. Set aside time to chat about books as a family.



time to read yourself. The children need to see you reading frequently (even the teenagers). That's how they learn that reading is a crucial part of adult life. Read the important things in their sight, but also be sure you demonstrate reading for pleasure. If it's not fun for you, "fake it until you make it," as they say. The important part is to convey a positive attitude about reading and raise literate young people.

Of course, your local library is the single best resource for getting reading material for the whole family. Make sure your library cards are up to date, and consider getting cards for the kids, too. Library cards open up a wealth of opportunities. Modern libraries have lots of print books, but they also have magazines, newspapers, games, computer access, audio books, movies, and more.

And once you've got them cracking books every day, don't forget that the process doesn't end there. Reading is meaningless if you don't interact with the book in some fashion. Set aside time to chat about books as a family. Ask the kids to write quick summaries and reviews (yes, I know they do that in school—it will help them prepare for the coming school year!). Try having talks about books everyone has read recently while you are going places in the car. If it's a long trip, consider reading aloud or listening to an audio book as a family to talk about later.

Tap Into a Reading Program

Most local libraries offer informal summer reading programs each year that start around the beginning of June. These programs offer incentives to get the kids reading, and are great, especially if the children or

teens have a bit of a competitive streak. And who doesn't love to get something for nothing? Most programs offer tangible prizes for filling up reading logs. There is also likely to be regular programming designed for various age groups, so keep an eye on the Activities Calendar. You may well find interesting speakers, craft activities, story times, games and more happening at the library in the summertime.

But the library is not the only place to find incentive-based reading programs! Look around at various local businesses. You can also find free summer reading programs, some with various types of prizes, by visiting business websites. Check out free opportunities at Pizza Hut, Sylvan Learning Center, and Half-Price Books. There are programs listed for summer 2022 at Barnes and Noble and Showcase Cinemas, as well. Scholastic and Amazon run summer reading programs that may be of interest, too. Just head over to your favorite search engine and enter the name of the business you'd like to check into with the phrase "Summer Reading Program 2022" after it to get details.

And don't forget your local schools! Many teachers send home summer reading assignments or list them on school websites. Don't just stick these in a drawer to gather dust! Take advantage of their suggestions to explore new and different kinds of reading with the kids.

Looking for more great ideas for summer learning? Check out my websites at <http://learningnook.com> and <http://sandyflemingonline.com>.

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FIELD TRIP

The Great Cassopolis Renaissance



If you haven't been to Cassopolis in a while, you are in for something of a pleasant surprise. Thanks to the continuing efforts of some very talented people (led by Village Manager Emilie Sarratore, above), the village is in the midst of a renaissance with nine new businesses open in the last 18 months, over \$170 million in construction projects that have already started or are about to start, a host of civic improvements like building facades, new sidewalks and infrastructure, improved alleyways, three brightly murals, and a spectacular beach and lakefront gathering place that has already hosted seasonal events with live music and entertainment, kayaking and paddleboarding ... and a promise of more to come this summer.



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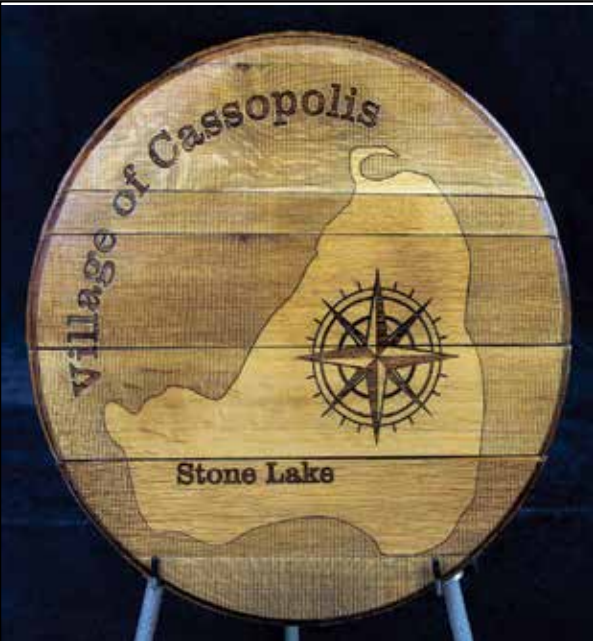


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HISTORIC POSTCARDS

Historic postcards depict rich scenes of area's past

In this issue of Neighbors, Jerdon Real Estate of Dowagiac, owned by Floyd Jerdon and his son Tom, has provided antique postcards of a few of the many lakes in our area.

Floyd and his wife Donna started collecting post cards more than 20 years ago, and since Jerdon Real Estate specializes in marketing lake property, it was a natural fit that Floyd's interest be directed to the lake cards. The collection now numbers many thousands.

Jerdon has recently used many of his postcards featuring the Sister Lakes area in a book written by RL Rasmussen. The book, which retails for \$19.99, is in its second printing by the

publisher, Arcadia Publishing.

Among other places, the book may be purchased at the Jerdon Real Estate office on M-62 West, and at Whistlestop Gifts, which is operated by the Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce.

For more information or to get a copy of Jerdon's book, visit the website: www.arcadia-publishing.com

In this edition of Neighbors we have selected postcards showing images of various places around Cass County. In future issues, we will couple additional cards from one or more of the area's lakes with views of nearby communities, lakes and countryside.



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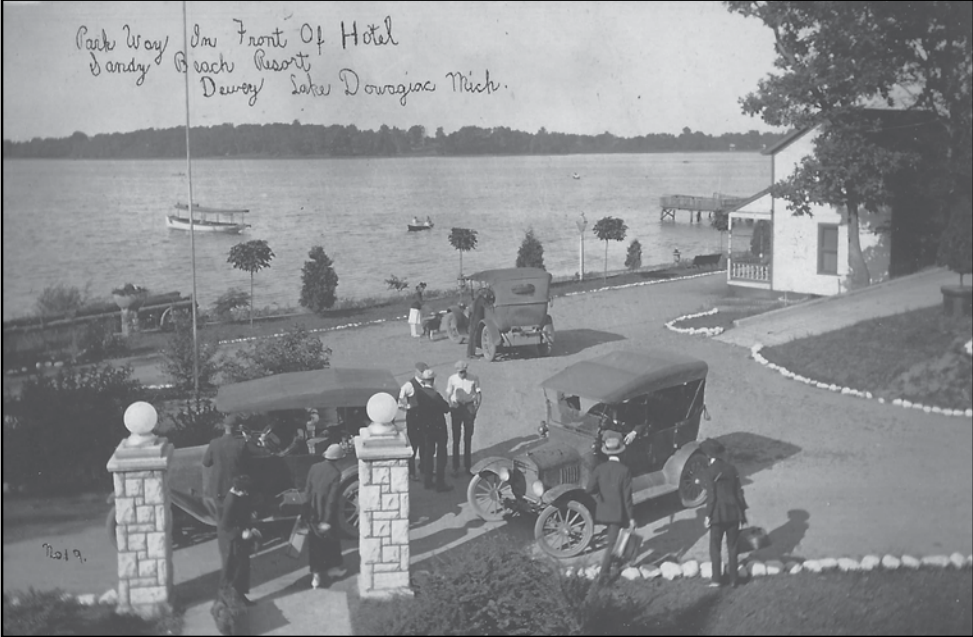
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HISTORIC POSTCARDS





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LOCAL HISTORY

The naming of Volinia Township

Provided by **Jonathan Wuepper**,
Branch Manager of the Cass District Library
jwuepper@cass.lib.mi.us

Volinia Township, Cass County, Michigan was organized in 1833, and according to historian George R. Fox, it was named "after a province in Poland," by an early pioneer, Josephus Gard. The original spelling was "Volhynia" but soon the "h" and "y" were dropped and the spelling "Volinia" was adopted by the mid-1830s.

I went in search of how and why Volinia Township was named and this is one theory I pieced together.

Volhynia is a region in central and eastern Europe, without any defined boundaries. The Volhynian region in Europe is part of three countries: Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine. The name Volhynia is said to be of Ukrainian origin.

In the 1830s, the borders of Poland and many other European nations were different than they are today, and it may have been that all of the Volhynian region at that time (1830s) was included in Poland.

In 1830-1831, just before our Volinia Township, Cass County was settled, the newly created Kingdom of Poland, containing much if not all of Volhynian region was attacked and annexed by the Russian Empire. Newspaper accounts report that in the Volhynian region, the Poles put up great resistance to their Russian invaders. This is perhaps why in 1833 Josephus Gard decided to name the new township in Cass County "Volhynia Township".

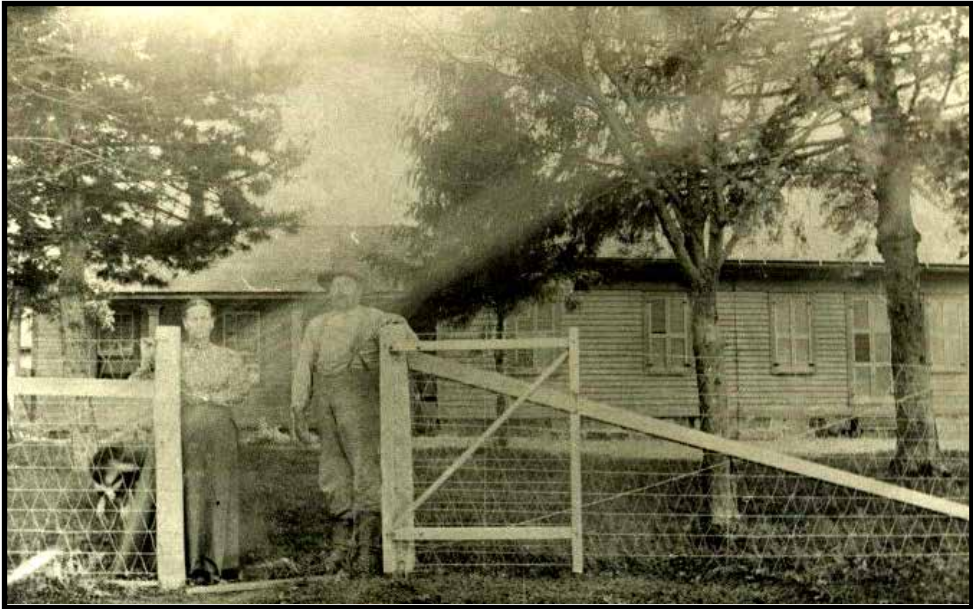
Incidentally, Josephus Gard who named Volinia Township was born in Morris County, New Jersey and came to Volinia Township in 1831 (when it was still attached to LaGrange Township). Gard soon moved to Royalton Township, Berrien County in 1840.

Huff-Kirby-Churchill Homestead. Built 1860s, section 28, Volinia Township.

Just a mile east of the famous Newton House and Newton's Wood's is



An 1860s Greek Revival style home located in section 28 of Volinia Township. Date of photo unknown, likely taken 1880s. The people in the photo are likely members of the Kirby family, as the John Kirby family owned the homestead at that time. The home is still standing in 2022 along Church Street with an addition and aluminum siding.



An 1860s Greek Revival style home located in section 28 of Volinia Township. Date of photo unknown, likely taken 1880s. The people in the photo are likely members of the Kirby family, as the John Kirby family owned the homestead at that time. The home is still standing in 2022 along Church Street with an addition and aluminum siding.

a private residence on Church Street, section 28 built during the 1860s by William Huff. The home has been added onto extensively during the last 30-40 years, but up until that time it retained its original look of a Greek Revival style home. Historians have reported that this home served as a stagecoach stop.

On April 1, 1865, John Kirby and family moved into the house in Volinia Township from neighboring St. Joseph County. I believe the first photo of the two featured this month was taken sometime during the 1880s at the residence during the time the John Kirby family resided there.

In the photo of circa 1880, the man

In 1830-1831, just before our Volinia Township, Cass County was settled, the newly created Kingdom of Poland, containing much if not all of Volhynian region was attacked and annexed by the Russian Empire. Newspaper accounts report that in the Volhynian region, the Poles put up great resistance to their Russian invaders. This is perhaps why in 1833 Josephus Gard decided to name the new township in Cass County "Volhynia Township."

standing dressed in the dark suit is almost certainly John Kirby. His wife, Mary Jane is likely standing next to him. The other two men in the photo are probably his sons, William R. and George. The other woman in the photo is probably Susan Kirby.

Susan Kirby married Levi Churchill and they moved to Paw Paw during the 1870s. In the April 23, 1885 issue of the True Northerner newspaper published at Paw Paw, it was reported: "Levi Churchill and family have bidden adieu to Paw Paw and gone to Cass county where he will work his father-in-law's farm."

The second photo shows the same homestead but with a middle aged couple standing at the front gate. The back of the photo (not shown) reads "Susan Kirby Churchill and Levi Churchill in front of the 1860s Greek Revival house, Church Street, Volinia Township." The photograph is not dated.

Since Mary J. Kirby passed away in 1895 and John Kirby passed in 1899, I would date the second photo to around 1900 to 1910. During the time Levi and Susan Kirby Churchill worked the farm and lived in the house, it was owned by William R. Kirby.

William R. Kirby lived in the home until his passing in August 1929. It then passed into the Essex family who owned the home and 80 acres until well into the 1990s. The house built by William Huff in the 1860s is still standing as of this writing but has been added on to and currently has vinyl siding.

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NATURE NOTES

Early April visitors a delight to see

*Provided by Cass District Library
Local History branch*

The first few days of April brought the first great egrets into Southwest Michigan from the south this year, including one on April 3 at Harbor Shores in Benton Harbor which was around long enough to be seen by several onlookers, including Ann Miller of Benton Harbor who submitted a photo. On average the first spring sighting of a great egret in Berrien County is April 2, based on several years of record keeping.

Most great egrets that nest in Michigan begin the process in May among heron rookeries, alongside their more common cousin, the great blue heron. While I am not aware of any confirmed nesting of the great egret in Berrien County, it is very likely nesting pairs have occurred among the inaccessible swampland of Pipestone and Bainbridge Townships.

Great egrets nest in shrubs and trees from 8 to 40 feet high. The nest itself is made of twigs, sticks and small branches and lined with smaller vegetation. Three eggs are the average which are bluish in color and hatch by June.

The number of great egrets in Southwest Michigan increased beginning in July from what ornithologists call post-breeding dispersal. During this time individuals from the south start to wander from their breeding rookeries and many end up in Southwest Michigan, augmenting our own local populations. The species gradually thins out as autumn progresses, with most great egrets departing our area by early October. Any remaining locally after the end of October are noteworthy.

Rick and Vicki Thomas of Stevensville have been visited by a pair of pileated woodpeckers in recent weeks, and Rick was able to photograph the male on April 5, while it fed from their backyard suet feeder. Martha Schultz of St. Joseph had a similar encounter with a female pileated woodpecker at her backyard suet feeder on April 7.

By late April, most pileated woodpeckers in Southwest Michigan should be



Great egret on April 3, 2022 at Harbor Shores, Benton Harbor. Ann Miller of Benton Harbor.

Continued on next page



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NATURE NOTES

in their nests, which consist of an excavated tree cavity lined with chips where the female will lay between 3 to 5 eggs between now and early June. Young fledge the nest anywhere from June through July and family groups will stay together through late summer or fall.

Pileated woodpeckers prefer large stands of mature forests in which to nest, and the best places in Lincoln and St. Joseph Townships are the wooded ravines and floodplain forests along Hickory Creek. Pileated woodpeckers are never common even in their preferred habitat.

Ruby-throated hummingbirds typically start showing up in southern Michigan during the last ten days of April. During this time there are typically a handful of reports of the species from Southwest Michigan, but the species does not become common in our region until the first week of May. I would encourage those who feed hummingbirds to go ahead and put up your feeders, unless of course you have already done so.



Female pileated woodpecker on April 7, 2022, St. Joseph, Martha Schultz.



Male pileated woodpecker at suet feeder of Rick and Vicki Thomas, April 5, 2022, of Stevensville. This male is told by the red mustache near the bill, and the red feathers extending from the forehead to the bill, both lacking on the female. Photo by Rick Thomas



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THE LAST WORD

by Phil Vitale
aka sailorphil

Stop the presses ... all hope has died!



very newspaper person since Ben Franklin has thought at least once in their career of shouting "Stop the Presses." Having personally been in the business for a career that (nearly) spanned the gamut from chiseling on a stone tablet to fully computerized and

radically digital media, I have often been tempted to take the Citizen Kane/Perry White role and put a screaming, screeching halt to a print cycle before the black-and-white-and-red-all-over hits the streets.

But having been counseled by more than one past managing editor to chill what most of them have referred to as my "volatile" nature, when the desire to shout "**stop the presses**" struck last month, I didn't ...

After writing my Last Word's ode to spring column last month and completing all of the requisite paperwork for the monthly grind, a scheduled upcoming vacation conflicted with the normal timing of getting the paper produced and eventually distributed. As I scrambled to finish my pre-vacation machinations, distracted by the minutia of the moment and the belief that this long-awaited respite would actually happen, I blissfully (and, in retrospect, misguidedly) submitted my hopeful ramblings a full week earlier than normal, believing like the Titanic sponsors, that even God couldn't sink my ship this time.

But then, just hours before docking my rear end in the uncomfortable seat of an airplane bound for my personal ocean of joy, disaster struck and I hit the ice burg ... at which point I came to the realization that the soon-to-be-published column in which I so naively gushed about the arrival of spring and my renewed hope for a return to normalcy after the horrors of the pandemic, all of those positive portents had suddenly been rendered moot by a new torrent of malevolent current events.

Having been taught in an ethics class about a million years ago in Ernie Pyle Hall that when you realize you had made an error in print, the proper thing to do is to suck it up, admit the mistake and as quickly as possible print either a correction or a full retraction.

So here goes. I was wrong. I made a mistake, and, I am retracting last month's column. I retract the arrival of spring. I retract the end of the pandemic, and I retract the notion that hope has come home. All hope is officially gone. Dead, dead, dead. I apologize for the error, but it's gone, done, kaput, shot in the azimuth.

This horrific story began innocently in 2019 when I signed on with a group of guys to be the captain of a sailboat that we hoped we could race that spring in one of the largest and most famous annual sailboat races of the Caribbean, the BVI Spring Regatta.

Having captained a boat in the Spring Regatta once before (that time with a crew who were more interested in avoiding a sunburn by shading beneath the little pop-up paper umbrella's in the local libation called a "pain killer") I was eager to take another, more serious crack at cracking into the list of top finishers.

But before new crew and I could even approach the starting line, Covid began to spill the wind from our sails, and just a couple of days before boarding our flight to the islands, the race was canceled and the islands were officially shut down to visitations of any kind.

In an act of benevolent bonhomie, the charter company agreed to let us reschedule for the next year, 2021, which we did. We re-planned, re-booked air travel and provisions, and made all of the necessary preparations ... but the iceberg came back, and one month before we were to fly south, and our plans were again scuttled when Covid-frightened competitors stayed away in droves and the races were canceled. Again.

So the charter company again offered us the chance to wait until the next race this year to fulfill our contract, which we agreed to. We re-planned, re-booked air and provisions and made all of the other plans, and as the date approached this year, it looked pretty good, Unsinkable, we thought. So I wrote that hopeful column and sent it off to the printer, grabbed my sea bag and got ready to head for the big bird headed south.

But three days before I left, I got the call. Disaster had struck again. My hope sleeps with Davy Jones.

This time we learned it wasn't Covid or an ice berg that sank us, it was a bureaucratic and political dust

up. The boat we were supposed to be sailing, the boat whose sails should have been billowing and blowing in the trade winds, was instead wallowing at the dock, covered in bright yellow crime tape, one of an estimated \$100 million worth of boats that had been seized for a variety of infractions that apparently included violations of maritime law, improperly registered and licensed boats, immigration violations and simple oversight.

To say I was disappointed and angry just doesn't seem to do it justice (although learning that the charter company had been forced to pay \$300,000 in fines for the violations seemed fitting in a Sicilian sort of way).

Whatever the reasons and penalties, the resulting FUBAR marooned my crew and I high and dry in Cass County dodging April Fools' snowflakes instead of frolicking wet and wild while covered in SPF 70 slimy sun goop at some seedy dockside bar on Tortola.

This time the charter company didn't even offer to let us carry the charter over another year, but even if they had, I doubt we'd have accepted. All hope has died. I canceled the trip. And now I've retracted my column.

Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me. Fool me a third time and I'd have to be some spectacular kind of damn fool to try again.

If that wasn't all bad enough, I had my entire right shoulder surgically replaced for this trip. I compromised one of my most basic principles and bought a dreaded cell phone for this trip. For nothing ...

Unfortunately these fell strokes weren't the only bad luck I incurred during my extended vacation purgatory. In addition to the three non-racing sailing trips I also had to cancel an apartment I'd rented with friends in New Zealand to watch the America's Cup races, to cancel a trip to New Orleans for New Year's Eve after an emergency eye surgery. Oh, yeah, the charter company also canceled a trip I'd booked last October for my wife and I to take a belated 50th wedding anniversary sailing vacation at Vancouver Island.

The only hope I have left is that Nietzsche was right and what doesn't kill me makes me stronger. And I promise if this happens again I'll do a Clark Kent trick, fly outta my phone booth and **stop the presses!**



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